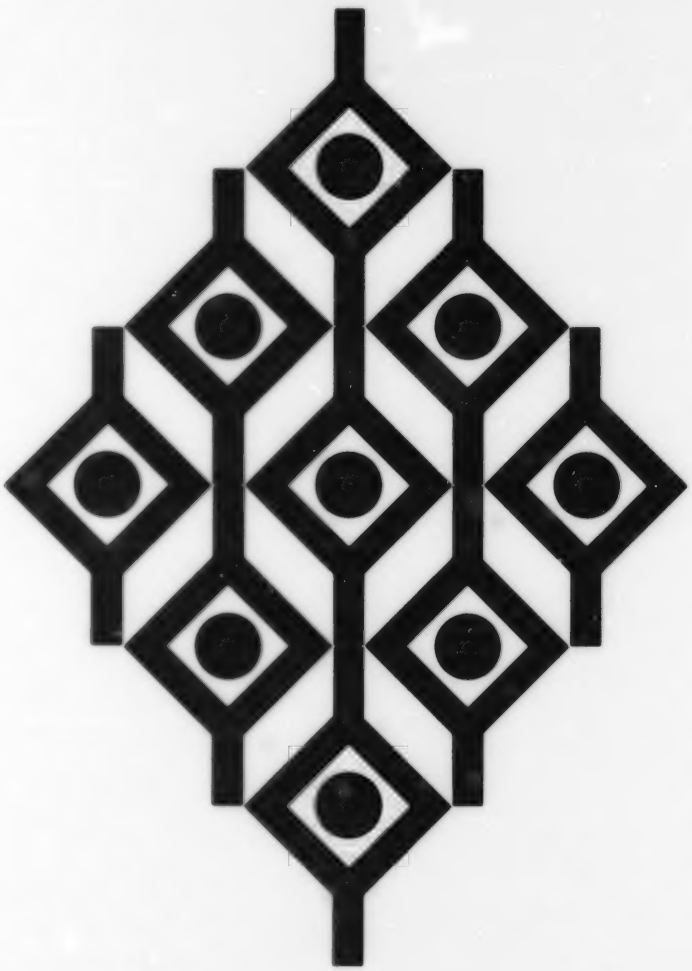
Manitoba's Policy for A Multicultural Society

Building Pride, Equality and Partnership.



Manitoba

A Statement of Government Policy for A Multicultural Society

Part One

Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 15, 1990

Manitoba

Introduction

From the original population of Manitoba, the Aboriginal peoples, through the arrival of explorers, fur traders and settlers, and through the successive waves of immigration that have marked our history, the fact of multiculturalism — of a variety of races and cultures having to find ways to live together — has been part of the Manitoba experience, as it has been part of the Canadian experience.

Deliberate government policies to respond to the reality of the multicultural society date from the 1970s when, in the national debate about bilingualism and biculturalism, governments acknowledged the need to recognize the contribution of groups other than English and French to Canadian life, and the value of retaining and supporting the continued vitality of the many and diverse cultures that are represented among the people of Canada.

Much of the focus of government efforts in this period has been on multicultural arts and languages as keys to the retention and community wide sharing of our diverse cultural heritages. This continues to be a critically important aspect of Canadians' efforts to express and share their cultural diversity — in their own interests and in the interests of the community as a whole.

Increasingly, however, government and the community are coming to recognize that effective policies for a multicultural society must also respond to a range of social and economic issues and opportunities relating to the challenge of diverse groups of people living together in harmony and equality.

The cultural groups who came to Manitoba in the past faced many challenges in their efforts to become established as members of Manitoba society. Over years and sometimes over generations, they struggled to overcome barriers of language, of discrimination, and of unfamiliarity with the customs, laws and way of life in Manitoba.

Many communities have succeeded in becoming integral parts of the multicultural society of Manitoba while retaining and enhancing their individual cultures as living and vibrant parts of the life of this province. Their success has resulted in a richly varied cultural life which the entire community can share.

Today's economy and the society of Manitoba are changing more rapidly than at any time in our past. People are choosing to come to Manitoba from virtually all parts of the world, bringing their widely varied cultural experiences, their skills and their aspirations to strengthen our multicultural society.

Like those who came to Manitoba in the past, they face the dual challenge of becoming established within our community while retaining and preserving their own cultures. This policy will encourage and support all Manitobans in their efforts to build upon the traditions that have grown out of our shared experiences.

This Statement of Government Policy for a Multicultural Society is a formal recognition of the fact that the multicultural nature of Manitoba has implications for a wide cross-section of the activities of government. It confirms government's ongoing commitment to the success, harmony and prosperity of Manitoba as a multicultural society.

The fundamental principles that will guide us are pride in our diversity; a determination to achieve equality of opportunity for all in our community; and a solid sense of partnership and cooperation as key elements in the success of the Manitoba experience.

The Government's View of the Multicultural Ideal

Manitoba is a multicultural society.

The Government of Manitoba believes that a multicultural society is not a collection of many separate societies, divided by language and culture. Rather, Manitoba is a single society — united by shared laws, aspirations and responsibilities — within which persons of various backgrounds have:

- ***the freedom and opportunity to express and foster their cultural heritage; and***
- ***the freedom and opportunity to participate in the broader life of society; and***
- ***the responsibility to abide by and contribute to the laws and aspirations that unite society.***

This ideal of a multicultural society affects all parts of the community and speaks directly to Manitoba's determination to meet the challenge of living together in harmony and equality.

The Policy of the Government of Manitoba for a Multicultural Society

The policy of the Government of Manitoba reflects the belief that Manitobans share in the multicultural ideal. Our policy is based on **three fundamental principles**.

- **The cultural diversity of Manitoba is a strength and a source of pride to Manitobans.**

To reflect this principle in action, government will pursue the following policies:

- Government will provide leadership to promote intercultural understanding, mutual respect, acceptance and harmony among Manitoba's many cultural communities.
- Government will encourage the efforts of all Manitobans to enhance and develop their cultures within Manitoba society, and will encourage the sharing of our diverse cultural heritages throughout the community at large.
- Government will encourage the retention of languages and the continuing development of artistic activities throughout our multicultural community.

■ **Manitobans, regardless of culture, religion or racial background, have a right to equal access to opportunity, to participation in all aspects of the life of the community and to respect for their cultural values.**

To reflect this principle in action, the government will pursue the following policies:

- Government will take action to ensure that throughout Manitoba, all members of the community — men, women and children — enjoy the rights and freedoms to which every person is entitled under our constitution and within the laws of our province.
- Government will work to provide services and programs that are sensitive to cultural values and traditions; government, by its leadership, will encourage institutions throughout Manitoba to follow this example.
- Government will actively support those who are addressing particular concerns, such as overcoming language or literacy barriers, or striving to acquire skills in order to become successful members of our society.
- Government will strive to prevent all forms of discrimination through education and through enforcement of provincial laws.
- Government will ensure that the multicultural nature of our society is reflected in its hiring practices, and in appointments to Boards, Commissions and other provincial offices so that these institutions are representative of the community.

■ **The opportunities of the multicultural society will best be realized through partnerships within communities and with government.**

To reflect this principle in action, the government will pursue the following policies:

- Government will provide leadership to encourage mutual help and cooperation in the creation of partnerships among the cultural communities of the province.
- Government will consult with members and representatives of Manitoba's cultural communities in the development of policies and programs.
- Government will involve the community in regular review and revision of its policies and programs to ensure that they continue to contribute to the achievement of the multicultural ideal.

Conclusion

For Manitoba, multiculturalism is not a recent phenomenon: we have been, from our inception, a multicultural society.

We in Manitoba are proud that ours is a society in which there is acceptance, respect and encouragement for the expression and enhancement of our cultural diversity.

The Policy set forth here will act as the foundation for government's ongoing efforts to work with the community as a whole to achieve the ideal of a multicultural society based on the principles of pride, equality and partnership among all Manitobans.

Building the Partnership for Manitoba's Multicultural Society

Part Two

Putting Manitoba's Policy for a Multicultural Society into Action

The Government of Manitoba has adopted a Statement of Policy for a Multicultural Society. That policy is based on the fundamental principles of pride in our diversity, a dedication to achieving equality of access to opportunities and a belief that the opportunities of the multicultural society can best be realized through partnerships among communities and with government.

Although these principles reflect the beliefs of Manitobans — beliefs that have been shared by successive governments of this province — there has not, in the past, been such a clear and formal statement of policy from government. Nor have there been the mechanisms and structures within government necessary to address the opportunities and challenges of a multicultural society in all of the activities and operations of government.

As a first step in ensuring that our Policy for a Multicultural Society is reflected in all of the activities of government in Manitoba, the Government will establish the following formal structures and take the following actions to permit it to engage in more effective partnerships with all parts of our diverse cultural community.

Providing Leadership for Government's Response to Manitoba's Multicultural Society

Designation of a Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs

The multicultural nature of Manitoba's society offers opportunities and challenges for a wide cross-section of the departments and agencies of government.

In recognition of the need for government to respond effectively to the multicultural nature of Manitoba society in all aspects of its operations, Manitoba will formally designate a Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs.

The Mandate of the Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs

The Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs shall act as an advocate within government to ensure that policies and programs throughout the government reflect the multicultural nature of Manitoba's society.

The Minister will strive to ensure that all of Manitoba's cultural communities have access to government and to opportunities to participate fully in the processes of government.

The Minister will act as the Chairperson of the Multicultural Affairs Committee of Cabinet, coordinating the efforts of all departments and agencies to contribute to the achievement of the multicultural ideal in Manitoba.

Working with the rest of the government, all of the Members of the Legislature, and the people of Manitoba, the Minister will strive to achieve the ideal of a truly successful multicultural society in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Multicultural Secretariat

In recognition of the need for greater sensitivity, responsiveness and more effective coordination of government departments regarding multicultural issues, the government is establishing a Multicultural Secretariat — a specific organization within the public service whose responsibilities will include:

- identifying priorities for actions throughout government that can contribute to the achievement of the multicultural ideal, and working with officials in the various departments and agencies of government to address these priorities
- fostering partnerships with the community to enhance sensitivity to the needs and concerns of Manitoba's multicultural community
- enhancing and fostering relations between the various cultural communities in Manitoba and assisting them to achieve shared goals
- supporting the work of the Interdepartmental Committee on Multicultural Affairs in addressing the issues and responsibilities that arise from this policy statement in all of the workings of government
- acting as staff for the Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs and the Multicultural Affairs Committee of Cabinet.

The "Outreach Office" of the Minister responsible for Multicultural Affairs

In recognition of the fact that members of many cultural communities encounter difficulties in dealing with government, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs will establish an "Outreach Office". The purpose of this office will be:

- to provide practical assistance to groups and individuals in their efforts to access or deal with government or government agencies in Manitoba, and to ensure that all parts of government are sensitive to the need for responsiveness in dealing with Manitoba's cultural communities.

Providing a Legislative Basis for the Multicultural Partnership

Over the next number of months, in consultation with cultural groups throughout the province, the government will prepare new legislation.

In that legislation, the government will ask the Members of the Legislature to acknowledge the achievement of the multicultural ideal as a shared goal for Manitobans, and to establish the fundamental principles of the Government Policy for a Multicultural Society — pride, equality and partnership — in provincial law.

The Manitoba Intercultural Council

The Manitoba Intercultural Council will be asked to act as an active partner in the consultations leading to the drafting of the new legislation and in the development of the multicultural partnership in Manitoba.

Setting Priorities for the Multicultural Partnership

The government's policy reflects an awareness that the multicultural nature of our society has implications for a wide cross-section of the activities and operations of government.

In the coming months, government will consult broadly among Manitoba's cultural communities to seek advice as to the best approach to specific initiatives in the areas of:

- multicultural health
- education in the multicultural society
- immigration settlement and adaptation.

In addition, the government will seek the advice of the Manitoba Intercultural Council and other organizations and individuals throughout the community with respect to other areas in which specific actions or initiatives can contribute to the achievement of the goals that Manitobans share for our multicultural society.